

NSU Student Interviews Sister About Military Life

Contributed by Jaliza Braxton -- Black College Wire
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Army lieutenant discusses how deployment affects family

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Imagine not being able to see your brother or sister for months because he or she is at war.

Last February, my sister, U.S. Army Lt. Nichole Braxton, was deployed to Iraq. After months of preparation for deployment, from a huge farewell party to putting her furniture into a storage unit, she set foot on a plane with the duty to complete a mission.

Since then, I have physically seen her and our only means of communication have been via e-mails and instant messages and sending letters in care packages filled with new music, movies and treats from home that are not readily available to many deployed soldiers.

Recently, during time before classes, I had a Q&A with my sister about how she has changed since she had been deployed.

“It allows you to see a broader picture on life and social economics,” she said. “A lot of third world countries don’t have liberty as we call it.”

J.Braxton: “How can you tell a soldier that has never been deployed to prepare for the changes in environment and mental stress?”

Lt. Braxton: “Being able to talk to someone is key. Keeping it inside will only eat you away over time.”

J.Braxton: “What do you suggest for those who are looking to enlist? “

Lt. Braxton: “Be focused, know that serving your country is a distinguished honor. A lot of people are afraid to enlist or just don’t meet the standards of the military.”

J.Braxton: “Do you think all soldiers need to be a leader?”

Lt. Braxton: “Eventually, all soldiers become leaders through the eyes of their peers when they are Jr. Enlisted.”

J.Braxton: “What is the first thing that you are going to do when you come home from deployment?”

Lt. Braxton: “Get beautiful again.... And kiss all my family and friends at the welcome home ceremony.”

Since February, I have conditioned myself into being prepared to answer stray phone calls from my sister at 3 a.m., just to help her have some piece of mind in a hostile environment. Something as simple as hearing a familiar voice gives her a sense of feeling at home.

From a civilian point of view, going to war may seem as if it is just another job that comes with the risk of tragedy.

I have come to realize that it includes situations that can be detrimental to the simple things in life, which are put aside to perform the duties that servicemen and women perform to protect our country.

Not only does deployment take a toll on the men and women of the armed forces, it takes a toll of worry and anticipation on those soldiers’ loved ones who try their best not to think of the worst scenario.

Until her return, I will be keeping in touch with her and keeping her entire platoon in my prayers.

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Jaliza Braxton writes for the Spartan Echo, the Norfolk State University student newspaper, which originally published this article.